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Author(s): Kultalahti, Susanna

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STORIES OF ENGAGEMENT WITHIN FINNISH GENERATION Y

Susanna Kultalahti

University of Vaasa

ABSTRACT

This is among the first studies to examine Finnish Generation Y. The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine Finnish Millennials' work engagement by analyzing their perceptions of motivational factors at work. The article also compares those perceptions on the part of working and non-working Millennials. The method of empathy-based stories (MEBS), developed by Jari Eskola, a Finnish sociologist, was adopted in collecting the data via social media (Facebook). The findings are in line with previous studies that have addressed Millennials' preferences in their working life, for example, work environment, social connections, job content, and flexibility. Non-working Millennials mentioned more clearly either vigor or dedication concerning the elements of work engagement, whereas the stories from working Millennials were mixed between these two dimensions of engagement, namely vigor and dedication. Thus, the perceptions of work engagement might differ depending on the work situation. In addition to using an innovative data-collection process in terms of harnessing social media and utilizing a relatively rarely used method in the business field, the study provides new insights through its examination of Generation Y. The paper suggests that Generation Y should not be viewed as a homogenous group, and future studies should concentrate on the possible distinctions among Millennials.

Keywords: Generation Y, engagement, motivation at work, Finland

INTRODUCTION

Working life has undergone major shifts in recent years in Finland as well as in Europe as a whole, and these shifts seem likely to continue to exert an influence

in the coming years. For example, mass retirements and the impact of an aging workforce will cause inevitable demographic changes (Eurostat 2015), and, as a consequence, there could be more people not involved in working life (e.g., retired) than actually working in the near future (Tiainen 2012). In addition, the demographics of working life will change as the relative proportion of young employees, namely Generation Y, will increase. In fact, it is estimated that by 2020, as much as 45 percent of the workforce worldwide will comprise members of Generation Y (Erickson 2008), and the same is predicted for Finland (Alasoini 2010). The proportion is noteworthy because in Finland as recently as in 2010, only 20 percent of the workforce was from Generation Y (Alasoini 2010). Thus, understanding the Finnish Generation Y is very important to understanding working life as a whole in Finland.

Much of the recent research has been conducted in the USA (see, e.g., the meta-analysis by Costanza et al. 2012), and there are concerns that cultural and national differences exist in the generational setting (Giancola 2006). This implies that it is important to pay close attention to Generation Y on a national level. Although Finnish studies on Generation Y are rare, there are some interesting examples. According to Alasoini (2010), the Finnish Generation Y is exceptionally highly educated and routinely uses web-based technologies. The Finnish Millennials' high education level means that they are both willing and keen to utilize their acquired skills in working life. However, Alasoini also notes that the Finnish Generation Y has fears and doubts relating to working life, as well as worries about coping.

However, another Finnish study casts doubt on the existence of Generation Y overall. Pyöriä et al. (2013) found no differences between Finnish generations regarding work values. Work values overall are said to be an important characteristic of generations (see Smola and Sutton 2002). Pyöriä et al. (2013) also concluded that the distinctive features attributed to Generation Y are exaggerated. However, they admit that Generation Y is better than its reputation would suggest in terms of not being as difficult and challenging—that is, demanding or selfish—as has sometimes been proposed.

In this study, the aim is not to examine whether Generation Y exists or not, or whether it is different from other generations. Instead, this study accepts that the concept of Generation Y is institutionalized to some extent (see Berger and Luckmann 1967), and is a hot topic in public discussion, the media, and research. Thus, the concept is built on the communication between people and is a result of this interaction.

Although it is difficult to show and verify the differences between generations because of the inevitable effect of age (that is, one might claim that younger people have always been challenging and different compared to previous generations), the view that Generation Y does possess special characteristics has gained support (e.g., Solnet, Kralj, and Kandampully 2012; Furnham, Eracleous, and Chamorro-Premuzic 2009; Wong et al. 2008). This study concentrates on understanding the phenomenon of Generation Y in Finnish working life. The study also questions whether Generation Y is as coherent a group as has been proposed and assumed (see, e.g., Macky, Gardner, and Forsyth 2008; Loughlin and Barling 2001). Thus, the aim of this study is to seek to examine the Finnish Generation Y's perceptions of working life and also to extend the understanding of its views from a human resource management (HRM) perspective.

Overall, a lot of employees in Finland are retiring, and they are being replaced with younger employees. This trend seems similar in other European countries as well and seems likely to result in labor shortages and an increased amount of recruitment (Christensen Hughes and Rog 2008). However, organizations already face difficulty in finding suitable strategies to recruit and retain employees (Ito, Brotheridge, and McFarland 2013), and there are signs that workers' interest in lifelong jobs is declining (Baruch 2004). Furthermore, research suggests that Generation Y might be less willing than their predecessors to engage themselves with their employer, and they can be, for example, more willing to change place of work, look for other job opportunities, or feel less committed to their employer (Solnet, Kralj, and Kandampully 2012).

Human resource management (HRM) will face the effects of the major shifts in the employment environment (Bakker, Albrecht, and Leiter 2011), and an age-diverse workforce will challenge HRM to change its role. For example, HRM will be required to show initiative to promote diversity in the organization and cater to the issues it generates (Ryan and Wessel 2015). In fact, Generation Y is, according to Shih and Allen (2007), an important employee group that has an effect on working life. Additionally, because of the intense "war for talent" (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, and Axelrod 2001) and changing motivational constructs that attract, retain, and engage Generation Y in comparison to older employees (Amar 2004), organizations and especially the HRM function will increasingly have to invest in both attracting new employees from schools and also in retaining those already recruited—that is, Generation Y (e.g., Lub et al. 2012; Shacklock and Brunetto 2012). An important

element to executing HRM policy in this respect will be the immediate supervisor (Bos-Nehles, Van Riemsdijk, and Looise 2013).

Research during the last decade or so has recognized characteristics specific to Generation Y. For example, according to these studies, Generation Y appreciates social activities and a pleasant atmosphere at work, and the meaning of the work environment could be greater than it was for other generations (Gursoy, Maier, and Chi 2008; Smola and Sutton 2002). In addition, frequent and constructive feedback (Martin 2005; Smith 2010) and catering for the work-life balance (Smith 2010) are among the top priorities of Millennials. Moreover, the role of the supervisor has been reported to be an important issue for Generation Y (e.g., Myers and Sadaghiani 2010; Arsenault 2004; Jamrog 2002).

However, even though there have been some previous studies concerning Generation Y at work, comparisons within the group are rare, and research to date has tended to treat Generation Y as a homogenous group. For example, most of the empirical research is concentrated only on either working Millennials (e.g., Gursoy, Chi, and Karadag 2013; Hess and Jepsen 2009; Cennamo and Gardner 2008) or has used student samples (e.g., De Hauw and De Vos 2010; Hurst and Good 2009; Broadbridge, Maxwell, and Ogden 2007; Sargent and Domberger 2007; Terjesen, Vinnicombe, and Freeman 2007), despite the research aiming at examining Generation Y in the context of working life. Furthermore, previous studies have tended to generalize, even though stereotyping and prejudices have been recognized as a concern with generational literature (e.g., Deal, Altman, and Rogelberg 2010). In addition, most studies have been quantitative.

Research on Generation Y should concentrate on examining different groups within this generation and on recognizing possible differences between Millennials, particularly concerning their situation with regard to working life. According to studies conducted in the Nordic countries, career preferences are prone to change, for example, as people move along their educational path (Kloster, Høie, and Skår, 2007) and as options broaden after their having acquired a degree (Rognstad, Aasland, and Granum 2004). Additionally, Terjesen, Vinnicombe, and Freeman (2007) found differences between the genders while eliciting attractive organizational attributes from the members of Generation Y, and Konrad et al. (2000) reported that the findings of their meta-analysis suggested that generational differences arise and should be examined in future studies, which would dedicate special attention to understanding Generation Y better than it is currently.

As Generation Y will dominate the workforce in a few years and because it will be vital to understand this generation better, my study contributes to the field by comparing the views of both working and non-working Millennials. Hence, this study proposes the following: *There are differences between working Millennials and non-working Millennials when they describe motivating and demotivating issues in working life.*

In addition, this study has practical implications. As discussed earlier, the human resource (HR) function and HRM overall will face pressures as Generation Y continues to stream into working life. However, because research to date has focused on generalizable findings, there is not a sufficient understanding of Generation Y, as it might not be a homogenous group. In addition, future challenges around recruiting and retaining young employees will inevitably affect HRM. Thus, this study proposes on a practical level that: *The characteristics of Millennials will have consequences for HRM in its attempts to attract non-working Millennials and to engage working Millennials.*

The following section reviews previous literature on Generation Y before initiating discussion on work engagement. The main findings will then be presented, followed by conclusions.

GENERATION Y IN WORKING LIFE

A generation is a group of people born within a specific time period (Smola and Sutton 2002). Members of a generation share “a common location in the historical dimension of the social process” (Parry and Urwin 2011, 81). The collective mindset of each generation consists of attitudes, beliefs, behavior, and values (Arsenault 2004; Smola and Sutton 2002), and every generation has created a culture of its own (Arsenault 2004).

The youngest generation now entering the workforce is Generation Y, also known as Millennials. According to Smola and Sutton (2002), Millennials were born between 1978 and 1995, although there is still some debate over how to constitute different generations and their years of birth (Hess and Jepsen 2009; Smith 2010; Smola and Sutton 2002). The mindset of Generation Y has been shaped by some earth-shattering events such as acts of terrorism, school violence, and natural disasters. These particular experiences have, according to previous research, affected how Millennials address the world and the kinds of values, opinions, and perceptions they hold (Arsenault 2004). Moreover, Millennials have grown up with technology: they are capable of communicating in different ways, manipulating technology, and using it in their daily activities (Smith 2010).

Since Generation Y began to enter the workplace a little over a decade ago, research interest has shifted to examine Millennials in working life. The majority of the research has sought to examine the preferences and characteristics of Millennials as they relate to work. Even though the field remains somewhat unestablished and it has been challenging to deliver high-quality research (e.g., Costanza et al. 2012; Parry and Urwin 2011; Jorgensen 2003), some characteristics have still been found to be essential in describing Millennials.

For example, Millennials are reported to be demanding when it comes to working arrangements and compensation (Smola and Sutton 2002). Also, according to Jamrog (2002), they have high expectations of their supervisors, and they appreciate having close ties with them. Further, according to Gursoy, Maier, and Chi (2008) and Smola and Sutton (2002), Millennials are active socially and enjoy having social contacts during their working day, which might also be reflected in the need to be respected by management and colleagues (Hurst and Good 2009).

Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) report that Millennials' relationships with their supervisors differ from those of older generations. Additionally, Millennials prefer a leadership style that incorporates a balance of flexibility, high demands, responsibility, time for trial and error, clear directions, and freedom to do things in their own way. Those preferences impose considerable pressure on supervisors, especially when all this should be accompanied by constant and constructive feedback (Smith 2010; Martin 2005). Further, Arsenault (2004) claims that Generation Y wants its leaders to challenge the system and spur change.

According to previous studies, in terms of motivating Generation Y, personal fulfillment is likely to encourage them more than external factors (Behrstock-Sherratt and Coggsall 2010). Nevertheless, instant bonuses and a variety of perks can also be used as forms of feedback for Generation Y (Hurst and Good 2009).

Generation Y also rates the importance of maintaining a work-life balance higher than previous generations (Smith 2010). Nevertheless, Broadbridge, Maxwell, and Ogden (2007) noted that today's young employees are ready to sacrifice their work-life balance in the short term or even relocate in order to establish a satisfying career. In order to facilitate Millennials' needs concerning flexibility, empowering them could provide such flexibility and also a feeling of being wanted and valued (Behrstock-Sherratt and Coggsall 2010; Broadbridge, Maxwell, and Ogden 2007). In addition, as Millennials are sometimes accused of being unwilling to engage themselves with organizations, the object of engagement for Millennials could be projects and work instead of the organization (Myers and Sadaghiani 2010).

WORK ENGAGEMENT

In this paper, Generation Y and its members' motivational perceptions concerning recruiting and retainment are viewed in the light of work engagement. As presented earlier in this paper, attracting and retaining a new workforce is becoming a critical challenge for organizations, and a deeper understanding is needed on how Generation Y could be engaged. This section presents the concept of engagement, first by defining it and then by discussing it from the practical point of view, that is, from the HRM perspective.

Even though the definition of engagement is rather unclear, it has still attracted interest in recent years, especially concerning the practitioners' point of view, such as professionals in human resources function (e.g., Arrowsmith and Parker 2013), but also in developing established research (e.g., Alfes et al. 2013). Starting from Kahn's (1990) work, which defined personal engagement as people employing and expressing "themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances," Schaufeli et al. (2002, 74) later defined work engagement as a "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption." First, vigor refers to being energized and invested in one's work, and also to the capability of facing hardship. Second, dedication includes the sense of, for example, enthusiasm, inspiration, and pride. Third, absorption concerns full concentration on the job, the loss of the sense of time while working, and a difficulty of detaching oneself from work (Schaufeli et al. 2002). Absorption can be linked to the concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1990), even though being fully absorbed—and, thus, engaged—is more of a long-term state than flow, which can peak in particular situations.

In this paper, work engagement is understood merely through the first two constructs of work engagement: vigor and dedication. Vigor concerns issues such as bursting with energy, feeling good when going to work, persevering, working for long periods of time, resilience, and feeling strong. Dedication deals with finding a job challenging and inspiring, having enthusiasm for and pride in the work, and accordingly finding it meaningful (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Schaufeli et al. 2002). These two dimensions of vigor and dedication have been used in previous quantitative studies (see the longitudinal studies by De Lange, De Witte, and Notelaers 2008 and Hakanen, Schaufeli, and Ahola 2008). Moreover, Gonzales-Roma et al. (2006) suggest that vigor and dedication are the core dimensions of work engagement. Work engagement is seen as a rather stable state of mind, as indicated in a longitudinal study by Seppälä et al. (2015). The aim of this paper—undertaking a

comparison between working and non-working Millennials—resembles that of the validation study on work engagement by Schaufeli et al. (2002), who tested their model with both student and employee samples. They found that the constructs of work engagement are rather similar across those groups.

When comparing work engagement to other similar concepts, such as commitment (as in Shuck et al. 2012), there are some common characteristics. Nevertheless, Shuck et al. propose that commitment precedes engagement. Moreover, Arrowsmith and Parker (2013) note that while research has addressed the issues related to work engagement and similar concepts, concentrating solely on the concept of work engagement is still rare.

In the Finnish context, the concept of meaningful work has been discussed relatively extensively in recent years (e.g., Alasoini 2006; Antila 2006; Järvensivu 2013). Järvensivu, Valkama, and Koski (2009) emphasize that the main point concerning the meaningfulness of work is the feeling as an employee of being able to perform one's task, and feeling that one can cope with the job. In addition, perceived feelings of respect, coping, and recognition should be present and supported by the organization. These characteristics are also present in the framework of work engagement and thus to some extent overlap.

In order to enhance or facilitate work engagement, there are some prerequisite conditions. For example, Christian, Garza, and Slaughter (2011) link work engagement and job design, as they view the relationship between job characteristics¹ and work engagement as potentially rather strong. In addition, they also mention that perceived meaningfulness of work plays an important role in this relationship. Seppälä et al. (2015) similarly found that both work content and personality aspects (that is, individual characteristics) should be noted when assessing work engagement.

In organizations, work engagement is associated with energetic, self-efficacious employees with a positive attitude and high levels of activity (Bakker 2009). Those employees would also be able to transform their energy into activity outside work as positive spillovers, making them generally active individuals at and outside work (Bakker, Albrecht, and Leiter 2011). In addition, work engagement has also been linked to performance (e.g., Christian, Garza, and Slaughter 2011; Bakker and Bal 2010) and financial outcomes (Xanthopoulou et al. 2009), as well as innovativeness (e.g., Chughtai 2013).

1 Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Job Characteristics Model (JCM) includes five components: task identity, task significance, skill variety, autonomy, and feedback.

Accordingly, HR professionals are among the people who have become interested in engagement-related issues and recognize it as a topic that should be both studied more and promoted more than it is currently (Arrowsmith and Parker 2013). In fact, according to Alfes et al. (2013), organizations wishing to communicate their interest in and commitment to their employees use HRM practices as an important channel to do so, and it is also possible to solidify work engagement through the application of these practices (Bal, Kooij, and De Jong 2013). Accordingly, line managers have become HRM's top priority because line managers execute HRM practices through their routine interaction with their subordinates (Alfes et al. 2013). Thus, the interplay between the HRM function and line managers is central to the creation of positive outcomes (Alfes et al. 2013), and as Seppälä et al. (2015) concluded, engagement could best be enhanced through the routine activity occurring in the workplace.

DATA AND ANALYSIS

The data collection process utilized two rather innovative methods. The first was the method of empathy-based stories (MEBS). The second utilized social media to reach the informants.

Motivational factors were examined using a passive role-playing method, MEBS. In MEBS, different background stories, or scripts, are described to the informants, but in each story one specific factor is varied. The informants are then asked to take the role of the protagonist (see Ginsburg 1979) and write a short story related to the given description (Eskola 1991, 7). MEBS has been developed by Finnish sociologists, and it was chosen here as the data-gathering method because (1) it is particularly suited to exploratory research (Eskola 1991, 10–11); (2) it can be modified according to the research field and interest; and (3) it can be analyzed using traditional qualitative analysis methods (Eskola 1997, 16). These characteristics supported the study setting in this research, which attempts to find a deeper understanding of the motivations of Generation Y and adds to the body of qualitative research on this group. In addition, MEBS can reveal issues unfamiliar to the researcher before the research process is implemented (Juntunen and Saarti 2000). As the aim of this study is to examine possible variations within the group of Generation Y, MEBS offers a suitable method to understand how a phenomenon is experienced in a certain group and if there are differing views inside that group (Halttunen and Sormunen 2000; Juntunen and Saarti 2000). Overall, MEBS deals with the same issues as any other data-collection method in qualitative studies.

The answers, that is the stories the informants produce, reflect their own expectations and perceptions. In their answers, they use the same patterns as in daily life when they are weighing different options and acting on their own perspectives. However, referring to a third party makes the answers easier to produce, even though the results can be seen as representations of the informants' own values (Eskola 1991, 10–11). The answers can therefore be interpreted as their perceptions. In fact, some of the stories were written in a manner that revealed the profession of the informant, manifesting the personal touch in the answers. Additionally, the stories that the informants provided were rich, and they used colorful language, which might not have been the case had the informants been asked directly about motivational issues. Eskola (2001, 78) states that it is not necessary to know whether the stories are real or not, as they are possible stories. He adds that even though MEBS can produce stereotypical answers, people make decisions and act based on these same stereotypes in real life. The advantage of using MEBS is also to reveal new themes. However, the technique can confirm previously known issues as well. The scripts in this study described a situation in which a person comes home from work. At the end of both stories a question was presented: Why does the worker feel as was described? Furthermore, the informants were encouraged to write a short story to illustrate their answer to the prompt. The scripts are as follows:

Positive script:

Imagine that one day Sami comes home from work. He feels truly motivated and he has a lot of energy to work. It is nice to go to work in the morning, and Sami is always looking forward to the next working day. Why would Sami feel this motivated and be so enthusiastic?²

Negative script:

Imagine that one day Sami comes home from work. He feels tired, and he cannot seem to find any enthusiasm for his work. It is not nice to go to work in the mornings, and he could not care less about going to work again next week. Sami is looking forward to the weekend so that he does not have to go to work. Why is Sami not motivated by his work, and why does he lack all enthusiasm?

2 The scripts have been translated from Finnish by the author. The data collection was carried out originally in Finnish.

After the questionnaire was created using the scripts above, the informants were approached, mainly via Facebook. This form of approach was chosen because members of Generation Y are comfortable being online and use the Internet frequently. The questionnaire itself was located on an external platform, and the link to the questionnaire was shared on Facebook three times in 2012. Viewers were asked to share the link by posting it on the Facebook walls of their friends. The data-collection process was both convenient and effective, and it produced 252 informants who were members of Generation Y.

These 252 Millennials produced 1,004 stories, of which 504 concerned motivation. However, as the aim of this paper is to shed light on motivational factors between working Millennials and non-working Millennials, a sample of the data was chosen for use in this particular research setting. As a consequence, the dataset comprises 173 replies: 96 of those informants had a permanent job, and 77 were not working at all. The stories based on the script concerning the motivation were chosen for this study. As a result, the data available for analysis are as follows:

- Millennials with a fixed employment contract: 96 positive stories and 96 negative stories
- Millennials with no employment contract: 77 positive stories and 77 negative stories

A content analysis method was adopted, and the data were preliminarily coded with NVivo. After several rounds of coding, the findings, presented in the following section, emerged from the data.

FINDINGS

The main findings derived from the stories are presented in Table 1. The results are divided into four categories following the precedent from previous sections: positive and negative stories of the working Millennials with a permanent contract, and positive and negative stories from non-working Millennials.

As Table 1 illustrates, there were some similarities between the groups and also between the positive and negative settings. As previously described, *immediate work community, work environment, and colleagues* were overall the most often mentioned issue in every category, regardless of the nature of the script (positive or negative), or the background of the informants (working or non-working). Thus, the Millennials emphasized the meaning of social connections in creating motivation and also as causes of feeling demotivated. On the other hand, an acrimonious work environment was

also noted as something that could lead to a lack of motivation.

As might be expected, the *job content* topic was also present in all categories, even though the emphasis changed based on the script. Interestingly, in both of the negative settings being *frustrated*, as in the subjects being bored or not being happy about their tasks, appeared as the second most often mentioned issue. Further, the

	Permanent Contract (n=96)	No Contract (n=77)
Positive, Motivating Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate working community, work environment (54%) • Job content (36%) • Meaningful work (35%) • Supervisor (33%) • Feedback (20%) • Salary (19%) • Progressing, learning (18%) • Flexibility (18%) • Sufficient workload (16%) • Work-life balance (15%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate working community, work environment (62%) • Meaningful work (43%) • Work-life balance (32%) • Education-job fit, suitable field of work (27%) • Job content (22%) • Suitable challenges (22%) • Salary, compensation (22%) • Flexibility (19%) • Supervisor (18%) • Progressing, learning (16%)
Negative, Demotivating Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate working community, work environment (44%) • Frustration (34%) • Supervisor (34%) • Sufficient workload (29%) • Meaningful work (25%) • Job content (24%) • Work-life balance (19%) • Salary (14%) • Feedback (10%) • Inflexibility (8%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate working community, work environment (60%) • Frustration (49%) • Sufficient workload (30%) • Supervisor (22%) • Unsuitable field of work (19%) • Depression, mental problems, burnout (17%) • Progressing (getting stuck) (17%) • (Uncompetitive) salary (17%) • Work-life balance (14%) • Feedback (12%)

Table 1. The main findings of the stories (the percentage of the informants who mentioned the issue).

informants discussed how the work appears *meaningful* to the protagonist in the positive setting. However, the opposite reaction was not as clear in the negative settings, even though some of the informants mentioned that the protagonist does not perceive his job as meaningful.

Notably, although they were mentioned, *salary* and remuneration did not appear among the most often mentioned issues in any of the categories.

While there were similarities between the four categories, the emphasis did vary to some extent. For example, *supervisor* was discussed in each category, but more often among working Millennials than in the other group. In addition, the frequency of mentions of *work-life balance* varied between the categories. Furthermore, receiving constructive *feedback* was valued more by working Millennials. In addition, non-working Millennials did not pay a great deal of attention to the *workload* being sufficient in their positive stories, even though in the rest of the categories this issue was mentioned several times.

Moreover, a common feature was the lack of references to *job security* by either group of Millennials, despite some passing references to redundancies.

Analyzing the differences between the four categories reveals some interesting themes that warrant further discussion. Interestingly, *workplace bullying*, *mental problems*, *burnout*, and *depression* were mentioned only by the non-working Millennials. This indicates that the picture non-working Millennials have of working life is to some extent harsh and negative, as they raised these issues without themselves having current experience of working life.

Another noteworthy issue is that of the education-job fit, which was addressed in different terms by each group. The non-working Millennials were particularly concerned with whether they would find suitable positions after graduating in their chosen field. Interestingly, working Millennials did not discuss this matter in their stories, even though it seems unlikely that they all have jobs that match their level of education and aspirations.

DISCUSSION

This study first examined work engagement among two groups of members of Generation Y, working and non-working people, based on their perceptions of work motivation. Their responses were compared, and as a result some conclusions could be drawn on what attracts Millennials to employers, and which factors employers wishing to engage them might emphasize.

Overall, the findings are in line with previous studies that emphasize the meanings of social connections and the work environment (Hurst and Good 2009; Martin 2005), job content and job characteristics (Behrstock-Sherratt and Coggsall 2010; Broadbridge, Maxwell, and Ogden 2007), flexibility and empowerment (Behrstock-Sherratt and Coggsall 2010; Broadbridge, Maxwell, and Ogden 2007), fear of stagnation and getting stuck (Martin 2005), and work-life balance (Behrstock-Sherratt and Coggsall 2010; Hurst and Good 2009; Broadbridge, Maxwell, and Ogden 2007) among Generation Y. The fact that relatively many of the non-working Millennials raised the issue of finding the right field and a suitable position implies that this group of Millennials is concerned with whether they will be able to find their place in working life after finishing higher education. In fact, Generation Y is the most educated generation so far worldwide (Eisner 2005). As a whole, Millennials have high expectations of their careers, and those expectations include having challenges and responsibility in the early stages of their careers (Hurst and Good 2009).

This study makes two propositions, which are reviewed below.

There are observable differences when working Millennials and non-working Millennials describe motivating and demotivating issues in working life.

The results and major findings allow some conclusions to be drawn. It seems that the factors that attract and engage Millennials differ to some extent. Non-working Millennials are more concerned about how to survive in the workplace, about finding a suitable and challenging job, and about obtaining adequate remuneration.

When the results are viewed from an engagement point of view, that is, with a view to vigor and dedication, there are identifiable patterns that are repeated in this study. Vigor was manifested in descriptions of sufficient workload and frustration with a job. Interestingly, vigor was present more clearly in the negative scenarios of non-working Millennials, who, in addition to exhaustive workloads and frustration, wrote about depression, mental problems, and burnout. In their validation study, Schaufeli et al. (2002) also noticed that students reported significantly higher levels of burnout (presented as the opposite to engagement). It could be that not being employed is a cause of anxiety and distress, and that is reflected in the stories.

The aspect of dedication was associated with more themes than was vigor. For example, suitable job content and perceived meaningfulness of the job were present in almost all of the categories, with the exception of the stories of the non-working

Millennials explaining the protagonist's lack of motivation. The issues of suitable challenges, progress in career path, and learning were also mentioned several times across the sample.

However, non-working Millennials' negative stories merely represent issues related to vigor, and their positive stories include more themes related to dedication. The stories of the working Millennials reference these two constructs in a more balanced way. There appear to be some differences between these two groups, which indicates that how to engage Millennials deserves continued research attention.

Millennials' characteristics will have consequences for HRM's attempts to attract non-working Millennials and to engage working Millennials.

There are several indicators visible in the findings that emphasize the significance of HRM in meeting Millennials' preferences in order to attract and engage them. Organizations recruiting Generation Y workers would do well to emphasize certain factors such as a pleasant workplace; a competitive and adequate salary, and some kind of merit-recognition system; healthcare schemes or other methods to promote well-being; and a variety of tasks or challenges that are appropriate to the employee's level of education. Once employers have recruited Millennials, they should emphasize their ability to provide flexible forms of working (in terms of time, place, equipment, etc.), varied roles and responsibilities, support from supervisors, and an assurance of a work-life balance. Overall, increased attention to work environment issues would meet the needs of Millennials and thus help motivate and engage them.

The analysis of Millennials' thoughts on work arrangements indicates that the absence of new challenges, too much routine work, or unspecific job descriptions adversely affect their motivation. If a promotion is not possible, members of Generation Y might appreciate the opportunity to multi-task or welcome job enlargement while they await promotion. This should be taken into account when HR is designing job descriptions, trainee programs, and career paths. Further, this study suggests that Millennials want to be given sufficient resources and time to accomplish their tasks in order to retain a suitable workload. Catering for Millennials' competencies through, for example, workplace learning or mentoring programs, could help them in terms of development and coping with their tasks. Furthermore, the balance between work and private life could be addressed with flexible working arrangements whenever possible, and this is an area where the supervisor's role is important in daily work-place management.

Limitations and future studies

As any study, the current one has its limitations, which can also indicate openings for future studies. First, the data-collection process introduced in this study merits some discussion. Even though there were several benefits in using Facebook (efficiency, convenience, and access to a large number of Millennials), there can be some drawbacks in using social media, such as its tendency to encourage shorter answers, even though the data were collected on an external platform outside Facebook. However, the experiences from this study are encouraging, and reaching informants in this digital age can be powered by social media.

Second, even though the sample is relatively large for a qualitative study, generalizations are challenging and should be attempted only with caution. For example, despite the turbulence currently engulfing working life, which has led to layoffs, neither salaries nor benefits were raised to a significant degree in the stories. In fact, there were only a few remarks on monetary factors. The informants did not even emphasize the broader aspect of job security or stability. However, it would be unwise to conclude in the light of these findings that Millennials would not appreciate stable positions and are not willing to engage themselves. Nevertheless, this finding is interesting and would benefit from further research.

Third, in generational research, the dilemma of age and generation is always present. In other words, some content in the responses can be traced back to the informants' age or generation, among other things. However, a meta-analysis by Costanza et al. (2012) confirmed that a generational effect does exist, even though its characteristics are not easily established. Parry and Urwin (2011) distinguish between generations and age effects, concluding that the mindset of an individual is a mixture of different factors, generation being one of them. According to Parry and Urwin, a generational group is formed on the basis of historical events and related cultural phenomena, and it is dependent on the social proximity to these shared events and phenomena. As a consequence, examining cultural and national generations becomes essential. Thus, while it is important to recognize these parallel concepts of age and generation, doing so should not detract from recognizing generational factors. In this study, the formation of a person's mindset can be seen as logically constructed in the early years of development—and in relation to other factors as well.

Despite these rather unavoidable limitations, this study should encourage future research to adopt new methods in collecting data and harnessing social media. Because this study concentrated only on work engagement, other studies on

Generation Y might consider burnout-related concerns, an opposite to work engagement, as health is of concern among young people in Europe (Eurostat 2015). In addition, longitudinal studies and in-depth interviews would definitely advance the discussion around Generation Y, as both academics and practitioners are interested in tackling the issues around generations.

CONCLUSIONS

In Finland, the discussion around Generation Y has been vivid and will continue as such in the near future too. The most interesting question is not whether this generation truly exists or not (see, e.g., Pyöriä et al. 2013), but to what extent the new employees, let them be called Generation Y or something else, shape the norms in working life or adjust themselves in the current situation. Inevitably, working life is changing because of demographic shifts and also as a result of political decision-making, including pressures to decrease the amount of student allowance and to increase the retirement age, and it could be that this generation accelerates these changes by demanding better working conditions, flexibility, and the possibility of combining working life and personal life in a balanced way.

It seems inevitable that organizations must take notice of Millennials and their needs. Even though there has been debate over whether generations exist in the first place, we are still facing a working life where a large number of employees have grown up in a different world than the rest. Moreover, stereotyping and generalizing characteristics can be dangerous, as Generation Y seems not to be a homogenous group. Instead, there is strong evidence of variations within Generation Y, which should be more carefully approached in future studies.

As a consequence, what signals work engagement will differ depending on the situation, for example, whether the informant is working or not. This indicates that the factors that attract Millennials, and which should be emphasized both in the recruiting process and in employer branding, differ from the factors that might be used to engage Millennials and retain them in this era of competitive labor markets. In addition, Millennials might engage not primarily with the organization, but with social relationships in the workplace, the work itself, or their own career progress. Hence the overall perception and understanding concerning engagement could be changing. Millennials in Finland have grown up in a society beset by lay-offs, and the ideal of a long career is an unfamiliar concept for them. In addition, the Finnish Generation Y has been raised to believe that education matters, and high education levels increase its expectations concerning a future career and work.

Thus, Millennials are worth taking seriously as a group of HRM clients, and as this study suggests, it is important for HRM to pay attention to different groups of Millennials, such as those studying and those already working. Supervisors are key players when HRM practices are delivered at the employee's level, and supervisors will need to acquire competencies to carry out their duties. Research can help both supervisors and HRM to acquire essential information on Generation Y.

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